1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

643 695 337 The name of the chief is sacred in so far as it is generally used in oaths. When asked to swear, a Nondwane man will say : "Maphunga!" (1)

II. *The Regalia.*

643 Kings everywhere like to adorn themselves with specially imposing objects, insignia of their office, which differentiate them from their subjects. The Thonga chiefs have no peculiar crown — the shidlodlo belonging to all adults (p. 129)—, no special garment, no sceptre and no throne. We sometimes translate by the word throne *shilubelo* viz., the place where one *luba*, pays the tax; but this is only a hut smaller than the others and subjects can also possess it. (See page 313). However there are, in some of these small kingdoms, royal objects which may be called regalia (bukosi bya hosi).

643 301 Amongst the Nkunas, the chief possesses a large copper bracelet called *ritlatla*, which was bought a very long time ago, in Lourenço Marques, by the Nkuna clan in exchange for tusks of elephants, says Mankhelu. According to others, the ritlatla was made in old times by Natives from the copper, or perhaps from the gold dug by them. The ritlatla was in the hands of the elder branch of the Nkuna clan; Hoshana was its headman, but he had fled into the Ñwamba country during the troubled period of 1855 to 1860. When he died, his people brought the ritlatla to the chief Shiluvane who belonged to a younger branch, thinking that, at his death, the ritlatla together with the chieftainship would be given back to

643 681 (1) Kidd, in his *Kafir Socialism*, has asserted that Bantu chiefs are very jealous and kill their subjects when they become too rich and thus overshadow them. This may be the case in other tribes or when a military government has taken the place of the old patriarchal system. Amongst the Thongas it is not true. My informants could not quote a single instance of a murder committed by a chief for that reason alone. I heard of Shiluvane killing a subject called Muhluhluni who had acquired too much power; but Muhluhluni had declared that he wanted to usurp the chieftainship; so it was a case of high treason! A rich nduna, in the territory of Nhandja (Nondwane), was also killed and his oxen taken by the chief because he had tried to abduct one of the chief's wives. But many headmen had as many oxen as Maphunga and were not troubled by him on that account: "Why should he hate them? They could not harm him, as he was protected by the supernatural powers, and they brought him all the more beer as they had plenty of wives and consequently of mealies!"

682 627 procedure. They are in advance of many tribes. The same cannot be asserted when dealing with witchcraft!

Witchcraft (Buloyi). To the Thonga mind this is one of the 754 greatest crimes which a man can commit. It is equivalent to 683 assassination, even worse than murder, as a dim idea of anthro- 787 pophagy is added to the simple charge of killing. A wizard 694 kills human beings to eat their flesh. We shall study the conceptions of *buloyi* later on (Part VI) from a psychological point of view. Here it is mentioned only in as far as it gives rise to judicial cases. This particular crime being committed in great secrecy during the night, and in most instances even unconsciously, the Bantu tribunal uses two or three magical methods for discovering it. These *methods of inquiry*, which civilised nations have long ago abandoned, are :

1) *Divination by casting lots.* The objects used in our tribe for this purpose are the magic bones, the astragalus of goats, antelopes, etc, and shells, which I intend to study in a special chapter. When they have designated (ku ba, to beat) the wizard or witch (noyi) who has killed such and such a person, they are consulted a second time. If they confirm their verdict, the relatives of the deceased go to the chief and lodge their complaint. The accusation becomes official and is now in the hands of the tribunal.

2) The chief sends the plaintiff and accused to the magician who proceeds to the *divination by questioning* them and working himself up into an ecstatic condition (vumisa).

683 695 824 787 754 3) Should the accused be again designated and should he deny his crime, he may request to be submitted to the *ordeal*, viz, the trial by the solaneous plant called mondjo. If the drug intoxicates him, his guilt is confirmed for the third time and the tribunal will condemn him. The punishment for *buloyi* is death, either by hanging, or by empaling, or by drowning in the river, if the wizard was in the habit of perpetrating his murders by sending crocodiles to kill his victims.

[177 681] Nowadays Native chiefs dare not put to death suspected witches. Since the Ba-Ronga have been under the jurisdiction of the Whites, the *death penalty* has been abolished. On the other hand, under

683 1906, I ventured to suggest certain means of checking the *buloyi*
754 superstition. The Department of Native Affairs might give the following directions to its subordinates, the Native chiefs :

1) The crime of buloyi is not recognised under penal law.

2) The Native chiefs are prohibited from trying any buloyi case.

3) The plaintiff must be reprimanded as disturbing the peace of the country.

4) The witch doctor or mungoma (magician), who pretends to have smelt out a wizard, must be fined as using his authority to deceive people and foster hatred amongst them.

5) No evidence based on the use of divinatory bones must be accepted.

These rules, if strictly enforced and combined with Christian teaching and the progress of civilisation, will in the course of time put an end to the scourge of witchcraft.

683 *Insults.* Ku rukana or ruketela, to hurl insults at each
695 other's head, is very frequent amongst Thongas and does not
578 lead to any judicial case, if not accompanied by assault and bruises (1). There are however insulting deeds which are considered as crimes. To take human blood, or spittle, or excrement with a stick and to push it into the mouth of a child, for instance, is considered a very serious insult which must be judged before the Court. A man who committed such an offence would have to pay a fine amounting to a whole lobola. I heard of a woman, who gave a child a butterfly to eat. The parents of the little one were very angry. She denied having done such a thing. They said to her: "Confess your sin and pay a fine of 5/—." She refused and offered to undergo the ordeal, viz., to drink the mondjo philtre. "If you insist" said they, "you will have to pay £ 10." However she persisted and became intoxicated ; this was a proof of her guilt. She was fined to the amount of £ 40, £ 20 for the child and £ 20 for the chief!

683 To point at any one with the index finger is also a grave insult
201 which may have judicial consequences, because this action is
754 brought into close relation with *buloyi*.

683 (1) The most common insult which women can cast in each other's teeth is
578 nikonkwaku (Ro) or nyatikwaku (Nkuna) which means: the genitals of your mother.
695 A scuffle with blows is sure to arise when that word has been pronounced. It is also used when taking an oath. Men swear by the name of their chief.

"You see! Stones also grow!" Another Native geologist, who had heard the European story of creation, coming from the Coast, a country of sand and sand only, and visiting the Drakensberg Mountains near Shiluvane, was amazed by the enormous cliffs of the Mamotswiri and gave vent to the following reflection : "No wonder we have no stones in our sandy land. When God created the earth, he used them all to build these mountains!" 823

Fossils are rare in Thongaland, where sand covers almost the whole country. There is however in the southern part of the Maputju region an outcrop of cretaceous rock which belongs to the Gault and which contains ammonites, Nautillus etc. Natives call them *nsongo stones* and are very much afraid of them. They say that "these stones with ribs" can walk. They bring bad luck (singita). Should a child pick up one of these fossils and bring it into the village, he will fall ill ; he must therefore undergo a special treatment. 136 823 777

Crystal greatly pleases the Natives. It is rare in South Africa. When magicians can secure a white or a black crystal they generally wear it round their necks together with the claws, or teeth, of wild animals, or with their little skin bags which they use as amulets. For this reason I once had the good fortune to be able to exchange a crystal I had brought from Switzerland for one of these charms! 135 301

The *earth* (misaba) is also a great and important thing. First because it is identified with the people dwelling on it, with the clan. *Tiko*, the land, means both the soil and the people. Further than this, the earth is the chief (I. p. 382) ; hence many laws : e. g. the tusk of the elephant which fell on the earth when the beast was killed, belongs to the chief, etc. (p. 57). The most solemn oath is that which is taken with earth (ku funga u hahla hi misaba). Should a man be accused of stealing or of being a wizard, if he puts a little earth in his mouth, says *tsu*, and declares : "I do not know anything about it," those who care for his safety will look for a medicine-man to treat him : it is a *mondjo* (a magical method of divination. See Chapter III). The same thing is done when an oath has been taken by sucking a piece of iron. 823 695 787

A curious superstition regarding the earth is this : after moving from one country to another, you should for some days mix with 823

d) *The smelling-out procedure.*

754 But should it be desirable to ascertain the name of the noyi, in order to punish him (for instance, in a case of death, where nothing remains but to avenge oneself on the murderer), the mungoma will proceed to the *shinusa divination*, the regular smelling-out. This can be done in two ways, either by questioning or by ecstasy.

1) *Smelling-out by questioning.* The relatives of the bewitched come to the shinusa, pay him £ 1, and ask him to find out the murderer. He makes them sit down in a half-circle, and, facing them, begins to put questions to them. They always answer by the word *mamoo*, which means yes, in the language of *bungoma*. Hence the Zulu term *vumisa* viz., "to make somebody say yes," applied to this ceremony. The *mamoo* is cool or warm, doubtful or convinced, and the clever diviner easily perceives every shade of meaning in this perpetual *mamoo*. He is well aware of all the disputes and hatred between the people and, in his investigation, he draws nearer and nearer to the man of whom the consulting party is thinking. Their *mamoo* becomes bolder. The questions are more precise. At last, when he feels himself in agreement with the consultants, the *mungoma* pronounces the name and lets his tail fall. He is bathed in perspiration after the great strain, and remains silent, as if he were indeed infallible ; he has triumphantly "smelt out" the culprit. Next day, relatives of the patient go to the kraal of the noyi, waving branches, dance before him, and say : "So you are killing us!" The accused keeps silent. Then he says : "All right. We shall come to-morrow and also consult our *mungoma*." Both parties then go to another diviner. The performance of "smelling out" is again gone through, and very likely the verdict of the second *mungoma* will confirm that of the first ; the augurs know that they must not contradict each other if they wish to maintain their authority, and the terrible tail falls on the head of the accused. As soon as proof and counterproof have been obtained, the case becomes a judicial one. The plaintiff brings the matter before the chief, who will not condemn until the

Z: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

754
695
787

guilt of the pretended noyi is confirmed by ordeal, the trial by the famous philter called *mondjo*.

2) *Smelling-out by ecstasy* partakes more or less of the character of the rera nyiwa. All the people have been assembled in the Capital. The chief wishes to collect together all the baloyi of the land. The diviner arrives, decked out with amulets and all the insignia of his power. In his hands he carries his magical

Photo D. Lestir.

Smelling-out a wizard.

tail, by way of a whip, and an assagay. He begins to dance, the crowd seated all round him, clapping their hands (wombela), and singing a chorus peculiar to the occasion :

Nwashongana khale ! Famba u ya teka, u ya teka, nungwana !
Beautiful dancer of slender figure ! Seek for it, seek for it, diviner !

He goes on dancing ; like Pythia of old he falls into a condition of extreme nervous excitement, ecstasy, inspiration. He brandishes his tail, dilates his nostrils, inhales the air on all sides, as if to smell out the spot from whence the evil influence has emanated, then takes to his heels in a certain direction, the assembly

754 still clapping their hands and singing. He approaches a hut,
695 enters, and triumphantly plants his assagay in one corner. A hole
787 is dug in that spot and — just where so and so places his wooden pillow when retiring to rest for the night — there are discovered a small gourd full of blood, packets of suspicious objects connected with enchantment, and perhaps a snake. It is quite possible that the diviner may have previously hidden these articles; nevertheless he carries them exultingly away; they are the wizards' weapons, the "bloods" (tingati) which they throw over their victims at night.

The shinusa returns to the village of the chief, who is veryangry, and orders him to go and show these objects to their owner. Then the magician, making a sign to the crowd to stop singing, will go and throw the articles in front of the occupant of the hut to put him to shame before the whole assembly. The mysterious charms, and the noyi's gourd, must in every case be consumed by fire, and then the sickness and deaths in the village should cease.

e) *The Mondjo ordeal.*

754 As already pointed out, the final and supreme method of
695 unmasking baloyi is the *mondjo ordeal*. This is a legal procedure ordered by the chief, a true method of obtaining information in a criminal case. This custom calls to mind the judgment of God in the Middle Ages (ordeal is derived from "urtheil," judgment); it is practised by the majority of the Bantu tribes, varying from one tribe to another, but everywhere it has the same end in view, namely the discovery of the casters of spells by the imposition of an ordeal which is supposed to be fatal to such as are guilty.

This ordeal is called amongst the Ba-Ronga (as also from one end of the Thonga tribe to the other) *drinking the mondjo* (ku nwa
[137] mondjo). The mondjo is a plant of the Solaneae family, probably a Datura, which possesses intoxicating properties. With it a special magician prepares a beverage which is to act as a means of revelation. It can be resorted to by any individual accused of witchcraft, or of any other crime. A woman accused of adultery,

for instance, may say : "Let us go and drink the mondjo." The mondjo magician will give both the accused and the plaintiff a little of his drug, and the one who becomes intoxicated, or unconscious, after having drunk the magic beverage will be convicted of guilt. But the mondjo ordeal can also be ordered by the chiefs, just the same as the rera nyiwa, not only as a warning, but with the object of revealing the wizards and in order to get rid of them. 754 695

This is how the ceremony is performed in Nondwane. When it has been decided at the capital that all subjects shall undergo this ordeal, the chief sends word to the Shihahu folk to prepare the mondjo. These particular folk are a small clan inhabiting the left bank of the Nkomati, not far from the sea, northward of the district of Manyisa. The mondjo is cultivated by the medicine-men of Shihahu, but they have by no means the monopoly of it, for my neighbour, Hamunde, who lived at Rikatla, a few steps from the station, had one of these plants growing in his village, where I myself saw it. But it is at Shihahu that the recipe is known for the preparation of this magic philter. This is very complicated and intricate. It contains several strange ingredients, amongst others, it may be noted, *the fat of a leper long since deceased*, or a little of his powdered bones! To make sure of the efficacy of the drink, the Shihahu folk experiment upon a certain individual named Mudlayi. This man is considered the very chief, the "bull" of all the wizards of the country (nkunzi ya baloyi). He is more powerful than all the others in casting spells. If, therefore, the decoction produces in him the characteristic intoxicating effect by which the spell-casters are discovered, it is certain that the brewing has been a success. If, by any chance, Mudlayi should not have been intoxicated, word will be sent to the chief that the decoction has failed (yi hi hlulile), and another brew will be made, until the mondjo has attained the strength required. Then the people of Shihahu do not go directly to the chief, but, according to the rules of etiquette, to the counsellor who looks after the interests of their country. The other counsellors come to greet them, but the whole business is kept a great secret. Messengers are then sent to all the sub-chiefs, telling them to assemble at a

754 certain time, in a given place, bringing all their people with them.
695 This general assembly takes place on the borders of a lake. Every man and every woman must defile before the proprietors of the decoction and take a small mouthful of it, tepid, from a particular receptacle. Already at this stage of the proceedings some few, terror-stricken, make a confession : "Ndja loya!" — "I am a caster of spells," they cry. These persons are then collected together and placed on one side under a tree. The rest sit down in a line, in the fiery glare of the noon-day sun. There they are, then, all seated and exposed to the torrid heat of the sun's rays. They have received the following order : "Do not move! You must not scratch yourselves! Remain motionless!"

Mudlayi begins to dance in front of them. With widely opened eyes he glares in a peculiar manner at those who have sipped the mondjo. In his hair is fixed a large feather, which he waves up and down by moving his head. Everyone gazes at him intently.

Suddenly some one scratches his arm. Sounding his trumpet, *nte-nte-nte*, Mudlayi approaches the individual and places the feather in his hair over the forehead. The man tries to pull it out, but only clutches the air on one side or the other, in front of the feather. He is quite incapable of catching hold of it. A second individual begins to show the same symptoms of intoxication (popya) a little way down the line. Mudlayi continues his comings and goings to the sound of his trumpet. A third and a fourth are overcome in turn. They try to get up, clutching the grass to assist them to do so, but fall to the ground, or crawl feebly about. The others keep away from them. It seems that the mondjo dries up the saliva of all who drink it, but, in the case of the truly guilty, this effect is greatly accentuated ; the jaws become locked. They try to speak, but can only say *be-be-be-be* (they stammer). They are carried off, and all placed together under the tree, where they are guarded by the chief's counsellors, who will not allow their friends or relations to come near them.

"*Selekan*!" — "Get up!" is the order given to all the others, the seated crowd who have not become intoxicated. Jumping to their feet, they must run at full tilt to the lake and bathe.

Some get into difficulties on the way, they jostle each other, fall to the ground, and remain there, unable to regain their legs. Some even fall down in the water ; all such are baloyi. The rest, who have successfully undergone the trial of the mondjo, come back and are restored to freedom, after having received three pinches of a special powder ; one of these is thrown over the right shoulder, another over the left, and the third is swallowed, in order to counteract the defilement consequent on having imbibed this drink of the wizards, which contained in solution... the fat of a human being! As to the poor, unfortunate hypnotised folk, their affair is settled. The magic potion has revealed their criminal character. They must be made to admit their evil deeds. The counsellors interrogate them. To restore the power of speech, a particular tisane, prepared from the herb called *tjeke*, is poured into the mouth ; they are shampooed *(tlhema)* on the cheeks and all over the body with its leaves. The saliva returns. They gradually revive and then begin to speak : "Yes! I devour men! I ate so and so and I still have some of his flesh in store!.. I hate so and so, and I would like to kill him, but I haven't done so yet... I bewitched the maize to hinder its growth." They are well reprimanded and told : "Cease your witchcraft and enchantments. Remove your spells from the cereals, let them grow properly, or we will kill you!"

How can the effect of the mondjo be explained? According to an old Native, the intoxication of the baloyi comes from the presence of these elements of human flesh contained in the solution. The noyi, who swallows them in drinking the philter, thus does during the day what he is accustomed to do during the night : hence the loss of his senses. As a matter of fact the man who administers the drug is clever enough to give a larger dose to those who are more or less supposed to be baloyi. Moreover there is a regular process of hypnotisation in Mudlayi's performance, and that is why some people fall into what seems to be a true cataleptic state.